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ABSTRACT

Claiming that discourse has atrophied in a social climate that provides little space for reasoned discussion of vital issues, this paper explores the role the general education course in public speaking has played in the past and the role this course could play in the future in the restoration of public space. Divided into three focused sections, each section of the paper is further subdivided. Section I presents a historical survey of basic speech courses from 1956-1985 to determine the current status of the "public" in public speaking. Section II presents a historical survey of public speaking textbooks (and how the public is reflected in them). Section III explores the value of including public life in speech education and considers how historical examples of speechmaking can help. The conclusion offers suggestions concerning ways the communication field can address the responsibility to mold pedagogical practice and stem the tide of the decline of public discourse. (NH)

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Teaching Public Speaking as Public Life

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Teaching Public Speaking as Public Life

by J. Michael Sproule

A number of disciplines in the social sciences and humanities today are paying greater attention to the public sphere. Theorists of the public realm express concern that discourse has atrophied in a social climate that provides little space for reasoned discussion of vital issues. Modernism's recipe for public talk seems to be four parts mass-mediated mush and one part vituperative protest. In a climate where bland establishment leadership finds challenge chiefly from agitators the result is a sterile technical treatment of issues accompanied by dismissive responses to challenges, a reflexive hurling of "ist" accusations, and a tendency to overpersonalize claims. Is it any wonder that today we find declining voter participation accompanied by a decreasing satisfaction with government and politics?

Political theorists and practitioners identify any number of causes of our rhetorical malaise. These include our too-visually-oriented media, propagandistic manipulations by power elites, a journalism focused on slogans and sound bites, the general problem of a technological society, the exploitation (by rightists and leftists) of ethnic grievances, and so on. Our era seems characterized by a yearning for a missing sense of community.

Nowhere is the breakdown of community more troubling than on college campuses. Racial incidents are well documented in the media and, ironically, seem to occur at the most prestigious institutions such as Harvard, Berkeley, and Stanford where liberal sentiments self-consciously prevail. The failure of the nation's most enlightened academic leaders bring ethnic harmony to their campuses suggests that official policies and proclamations, unaccompanied by a supporting body of public discourse, may be insufficient to defuse the latent social anger that Christopher Lasch finds prevalent among Americans today. Across the nation, opinion leaders are asking how our various polities and campuses can find the sense of mutual connectedness and responsibility that necessarily underlie the concept of publicness.

Is it possible that the lowly general education course in public speaking can play a role in the restoration of vibrant public spaces? Does rhetoric and public address--our field's traditional nods to the public sphere--have anything besides obscure terminology and arcane facts to offer the public speaking course? However much a rhetorician might read such inquiries as mere straw men, the questions are all too real in our field as

a whole. A colleague once told me of a comment he received about his draft chapter for a proposed public speaking textbook. Wrote one reviewer: "Why are you putting in all these old rhetoricians? Get rid of them."

However, given that many public speaking teachers have backgrounds in traditional rhetoric and public address, there may be reservoirs of support for taking up these elements as levers to pry open the painted over windows of the public sphere. One step in restoring public discourse may be to put the public back into public speaking.

I. The Current Status of the Public in Public Speaking

Directly or implicitly, speech educators provide their students with a model of the public sphere. As reflected in today's public speaking course, the public exists chiefly either as a shadow or a cipher.

I.A. Surveys of the basic speech course indicate that public life is a disregarded topic in the public speaking course.

1956:

A total of 2.3% respondents indicated that an objective of the first course was either tne "role of speech in a democracy" or the "place of speech in society" (Donald E. Hargis, Speech Teacher, 5 [1956], 29).

Further, the values that respondents indicated were received by students from the first course were overwhelmingly individualistic: "self-improvement" (61.1 % of respondents), "poise and self-confidence" (65.2%).

1970:

Only 8 percent of schools responding to the survey listed as an objective of their department's basic course to "realize the importance of speech in society" (James W. Gibson, Charles R. Gruner, William D. Brooks, Charles R. Petrie, Jr., Speech Teacher, 19 [1970], 16).

The researchers did not include "speech in society" on the list of 23 possible "units taught in the basic course" (1970, 15).

1980:

Public life was not cited as a topic among the 20 offered to respondents by the researchers. The authors observed that "performance-oriented activities" received increasing emphasis (Gibson, et al., Communication Education, 29 [1980], 3).

(Note, however: 17.9 percent of respondents whose first course emphasized public speaking indicated that rhetorical criticism was treated in the course.)

1985:

Respondents were asked to list "the ten topics which received the greatest amount of time in their course."

Results: public life does not appear as a possible "course orientation" or "topic receiving greatest amount of time" (James W. Gibson, Michael S. Hanna, Bill M. Huddleston, CE, 34 [1985], 287).

I.B. The stated objectives of most public speaking programs do not mention public life.

Mainstream speech education regards as extraneous anything that links public speaking to social debates, to society in general, and to history.

When speech teachers acknowledge the value of treating public life, they are likely to recommend that such material be placed in an advanced course.

In other words, the attitude of speech professionals is that ordinary students do not need instruction in the relation of speech to democratic life in a lively public sphere.

The characteristic narrowness of objectives set for basic public speaking courses was brought home to me in reviews I received concerning an introductory public speaking text I published in 1991.

I.B.1. The objectives that are commonly reported for the basic public speaking course reveal a very thin notion of the public sphere.

One reviewer summarized the objectives of the course at his or her school: "(a) Understand the style and substance of public communication; (b) Be able to organize a speech according to the requirements of the situation, audience, and occasion; (c) use

effective delivery in generating and maintaining audience interest; (d) Understand the difference between informative and persuasive speaking; and (e) feel more comfortable in speaking situations" (review, 10/26/89).

Another reviewer explained: "The objectives of the course are to provide the students the opportunity to gain an understanding of the principles of speech communicati , ease at speaking in front of others, and the essentials of speech organization and delivery" (review, 6/20/88).

A third reviewer explained: "We stress speech fundamentals, placing roughly equal emphasis on organization, delivery and the generation of source material" (review, 6/22/88).

A fourth reviewer stated the objectives of a public speaking course as being to "teach students the basic knowledge about and skills in public speaking" (review, 11/4/88).

I.B.2. The concept of public life seemingly does not fit the barebones notion of "basic" that is prevalent in our field.

The view of public speaking endemic in our field is one of individualized improvement by personal ability to run through the steps of the speech process.

One textbook reviewer explained to me that a spectrum of historical examples could not be considered an end in itself. The only value of examples would be the narrow objective of illustrating a particular technique (review, 11/12/87).

To the extent that we conceive of public speaking as presenting information we model a sterile public sphere. One reviewer explained to me that the informative speech is central to public speaking and therefore the "argumentation" approach had a lesser value (review, 11/12/87). Where speakers see themselves as custodians of information, the idea of speech as public advocacy withers.

I.B.3. There seems to be only a limited acceptance in our field for the idea of going beyond the basics of technique and process.

While the career connection of public speaking often is explicitly emphasized by speech teachers and textbooks, few reviewers report that they include public life explicitly as an objective for instruction. One reviewer, however, did cite public life as one of four objectives at his or her college: "To provide students with an opportunity to understand the nature and functions of public speaking in modern society" (11/14/87). The other three objectives dealt with technique or process considera-

tions: principles of preparation and delivery, experience in delivering speeches, constructive criticism of students.

Attention to public life is not seen as part of the mainstream. One reviewer acknowledged that "presenting speech fundamentals in a broader humanities perspective" as opposed to "sheer mechanics" might be attractive to some in our field--if they took a "traditional" approach (review, 10/31/89).

I.C. We may observe that public life has remained a disregarded topic even though the public speaking course itself has enjoyed a revival since the late 1970s.

The percentage of schools focusing their basic course on public speaking fell in the era of protest--and then rose again.

1956: 64%
1964: 54.68
1968: 54.5%
1974: 21.3%
1980: 51.3%
1984: 54%

(sources: James W. Gibson, John A. Kline, and Charles R. Gruner, ST, 23 [1974], 207; Donald R. Dedmon and Kenneth D. Frandsen, ST, 13 [1964], 34); Donald E. Hargis, ST, 5 [1956], 28; Gibson, et al., Communication Education, 29 [1980], 2; James W. Gibson, Michael S. Hanna, Bill M. Huddleston, CE, 34 [1985], 283.)

II. The Public as Reflected in Public Speaking Textbooks

Since the nineteenth century, the trend in our textbooks has been decidedly away from attention to public life.

II.A. Since the Civil War, the shift away from rhetoric has caused considerations of public life to atrophy in rhetorical education.

The decline of the public sphere in modern times paralleled the disappearance of oratory and rhetoric from central positions in the curriculum. By the mid-nineteenth century, science was increasingly successful in its claim to be the legitimate source of knowledge, and universities reorganized their curricula along scientific lines. The elective system and disciplinary specialization further contributed to the decline of rhetoric--that most unspecialized of endeavors. But because students had to be prepared for careers, a vestige of rhetoric remained in the

form of an efficient written composition. Education in the mechanics of writing seemed to fit an increasingly technological society in which universities prepared young men and women for careers in a production-oriented economy.

II.A.1. Up to the Civil War, Richard Whately's Elements of Rhetoric was a major textbook used in America, and students often debated issues of current importance.

Whately's Rhetoric was a highly theoretical work, but the book also included illustrations drawn from the Bible, Christian apologetics, the French Revolution, classical rhetoric and history, English history, English Parliamentary debates and laws.

During the time when Whately's Rhetoric was a major textbook in American colleges, debating and speaking were important parts of college life. School athletic teams had not yet become significant, and many students participated in the speaking clubs which enjoyed considerable prestige. Smaller class sizes allowed students to participate in recitation; however, by the turn of the century, written examinations were well on their way to replacing oral presentations in class.

II.A.2. In contrast to a Whatelian curriculum, the development of English composition shifted attention to the technical mechanics of communication.

The goal of efficient communication for purposes of commerce meant that textbooks and instructors provided a very narrow vision of the public sphere. Both the mechanical approach and the focus on writing fit the needs of business but neglected the idea of public life.

An example of the narrower notion of publicness that was abroad in the world of English composition may be seen in The Principles of Rhetoric (1897) by Adams Sherman Hill.

According to Hill, "Rhetoric may be defined as the art of efficient communication by language." "It is an art, not a science: for it neither observes nor discovers, nor classifies; but it shows how to convey from one mind to another the results of observation, discovery, or classification" (v).

Part I, "Composition in General," focuses on good grammatical usage and choice of clear and forceful words. The examples are drawn chiefly from literary and academic writers. The first 246 pages take the reader up to the level of the sentence.

Part II deals with "Kinds of Composition." Hill begins with scientific and artistic description. Then he treats narration

using literary examples. Next comes exposition which addresses only the understanding and not the feelings or will. In other words, exposition was a kind of composition that expected no action to result. Finally, on page 327 of Hill's book, we begin study of argument. Here scientific and literary examples compete with ones drawn from politics.

Throughout Hill's book the view of communication as an efficient technical process prevails. Argument--the root of traditional rhetoric--is a kind of afterthought. Further, the model of the public sphere provided through the examples is a very narrow one. Literary expression and academic pondering are the chief models of discourse offered.

II.B. Although the emergence of the speech communication field reasserted the position of orality in the curriculum, the "plain speech" orientation adopted by our field maintained the growing estrangement of public life from the speech classroom.

In their haste to separate the new "plain speech" approach from the old oratory, speech educators offered public speaking chiefly as a device for individual improvement and for success in the business world.

Early speech educators were not entirely sure of what the parameters of new-style public speaking would be as when one professor told about "The Place of Jujitsu in Public Speaking" (Kenneth L. Williams, QJS, 11 [1925], 163-164). Jujitsu helped students with their breathing, it seemed. But one thing the professors knew for sure was that twentieth century public speaking would not be like old-fashioned political oratory.

II.B.1. The goal of self-improvement. An increasingly important objective was the individual's personal growth through self-expression.

Representative of the goal of self-improvement was Elwood Murray's notion that public speaking could serve as a modern therapy for developing "confidence, poise, and self-mastery." In helping students to develop their speech personalities the teachers could learn "from the fields of psychiatry and mental hygiene" ("Speech Training as a Mental Hygiene Method," QJS, 20 [1934], 37-47).

II.B.2. The goal of career enhancement. Early public speaking education pictured politics as a special profession rather than as a citizen obligation. Since few modern students would want to take up a career in politics, most would have greater interests

in the world of commerce. "The student in the schools of today has a thousand different possibilities open to him; he does not have to choose the Senate or the courts to be assured of a career. Most of the young men to graduate from our schools enter into professions and trades where oratory, in the sense of the speech of Demosthenes, would be sadly out of place" (Giles W. Gray, "How Much Are We Dependent on the Ancient Greeks and Romans?" QJS, 9 [1923], 264).

Business considerations loomed large in the evolving new conception of plain public speaking and speech teachers looked with interest to how independent practitioners were teaching speech to business people. For example, Edwin Puls explained that he had learned important lessons from the business men who dropped his YWCA course. No longer would he use the old-fashioned elocutionary terminology ("Speech Training for Business Men," QJS, 3 [1917], 332-335).

Academic teachers of public speaking explicitly feared the competition from amateur promoters such as Dale Carnegie (see J. M. O'Neill, "The True Story of $10,000 Fears," QJS, 5 [1919], 128-137).

Academic teachers took up the practical orientation that was abroad in America of the 1920s. Wibur J. Kay of Washington and Jefferson College explained how in his course "we spend no time on the ornaments and frills of speech but stick to brass tacks." From the first, Kay showed students how "the ability to speak well has opened the way to preferment and rapid rise to success" ("Course I in Public Speaking at Washington and Jefferson College," QJS, 3 [1917], 243).

II.C. The "plain speech" approach, with its emphasis on personal development and career success, influenced early textbooks in a direction decidedly away from public life.

II.C.1. Given that personal growth and career preparation were the key objectives for the speech field, new kinds of introductory courses competed with public speaking.

The interest in developing speech as a distinct field having a significant theoretical content led to a search for approaches to the basic course other than public speaking.

"Is Public Speaking Out?" asked James Winans who wondered whether the new attention to conference speaking, business speech, and conversation would divert attention away from traditional public speaking (QJS, 17 [1931], 173).

II.C.2. While public speaking remained as the largest orientation in general education, many speech educators took a process-oriented approach focused on individual development. Such an emphasis for the course provided a thin or a nonexistent model of the public sphere.

While public speaking predominated as the basic course, our field strove to prove that the course was relevant to the business-oriented world. Teachers were anxious to move away from old fashioned "oratory" since people were less interested politics (seen as a career rather than a citizen's responsibility) and more concerned with a career-relevant public speaking.

Alan H. Monroe's text, Principles and Types of Speech (2nd ed.; New York: Scott, Foresman, 1939) is representative of the new-style public speaking book. Monroe wrote in an appealing "I-speaking-to-you" voice that must have carried quite a punch for students used to detached textbook writing. The orientation of the book was practical, assuming that students were consummate individualists who needed to be coaxed into seeing the personal relevance of speech. Monroe described his approach as "functional," emphasizing "the purpose, function, and effect of the speech more constantly and consistently than does the traditional book" (p. vii). Archetype of the functionalist orientation was Monroe's motivated sequence which, he explained, was drawn from books on business psychology and the sales talk (pp. xi-xii).

Not only did Monroe's functionalist approach, modeled on the sales talk, provide a very narrow model of the public sphere, but his examples reinforced the notion that public life was a shadow. In the first 115 pages of the book, Monroe employed approximately five examples of actual speakers (Webster, Will Rogers, Disraeli, Lincoln, St. Clair McKelway [editor of the Brooklyn Eagle]) along with end-of-chapter excerpts taken from Edward Everett and Patrick Henry. The overwhelming number of examples are hypothetical, explanations of what some unnamed speaker did or might do accompanied by advice to the student about what "you" could do. In the chapter on organization, the hypothetical examples tended to reflect instances where a speaker reported things observed or experienced or where professionals talked of their work.

II.C.3. Even where rhetorical scholars wrote textbooks, the attention to the public sphere was not necessarily significant.

In the first 130 pages James Winans' text, Speech-Making (New York: Appleton-Century, 1938), we find more examples than in Monroe (approximately 13 noted speakers as opposed to five), but hypothetical examples are given almost equal weight. Comparison of the chapters on organization, however, shows that

Winans relies on hypotheticals where Monroe cites at least five known public speakers.

It is surprising that Winans' examples gave so limited a view of the public sphere given that he believed in reconciling traditional oratory and business-oriented "plain speech." Winans believed that "if we really teach our students to speak well they will readily adapt themselves to whatever situation they come into" (QJS, 17 [1931], 173).

II.C.4. However, W. N. Brigance--that much maligned symbol of the old rhetorical criticism--was a public speaking text writer who used examples to convey a sense of a lively, active public sphere (New York: F.S. Crofts, Speech Composition, 1937).

Like Monroe and Winans, Brigance focuses his chapters on the practical problems of beginning speakers in going through the process of speechmaking. However, Brigance uses examples of great speakers doing their work, ranging from Daniel Webster to Emma Goldman. In the first 119 pages, Brigance gives instances of at least 25 speakers. His chapter on organization contains at least 35 instances drawn from 20 different speakers.

II.C.5. The pattern of the 1930s textbooks prevailed through the early 1960s. The pedagogy was barebones and focused on the individual speaker. Examples tended to be hypothetical and focused on personal or professional interests. Occasionally, a book would imply the existence of a lively public sphere by presenting either a small or a large number of examples drawn from great speakers.

(According to a survey published in 1964, the most commonly used books were: William N. Brigance, Speech: Its Techniques and Disciplines in a Free Society, 2nd ed. (1961) and Brigance, Speech Composition, 2nd ed. (1955); Alan H. Monroe, Principles and Types of Speech, 5th ed. (1962); Donald C. Bryant and Karl R. Wallace, Fundamentals of Public Speaking, 3rd ed. (1960) and Bryant and Wallace, Oral Communication, 3rd ed. (1962); James H. McBurney and Ernest J. Wrage, The Art of Good Speech (1953) and Guide to Good Speech, 2nd ed. (1960); Milton Dickins, Speech: Dynamic Communication, 2nd ed. (1963); taken from Donald R. Dedmon and Kenneth D. Frandsen, ST, 13 [1964].)

II.D. Textbooks today.

The early pattern continues in which textbooks treat public speaking as (1) the personal acquisition of steps and (2) a set of tools embedded in a communication process that is focused on the work-day world.

As with books of the 1930s, today's texts more often than not rely on hypothetical examples. These are supplemented by actual excerpts or examples drawn from such sources as Vital Speeches. Since the real-world examples often pertain to professional matters, a thin model of the public sphere predominates. A case in point is Rudolph Verderber's The Challenge of Effective Speaking (8th ed.; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1991)

As in the 1930s, however, one occasionally stumbles onto books in which either the description of the speech process or the examples of speech-in-action draw a broader public sphere. Representative here is Otis M. Walter's and Robert L. Scott's Thinking and Speaking (5th ed.; New York: Macmillan, 1984). The book begins with a broad notion of a "rhetorical world" that connects a speech process to a wider society. The narration is reminiscent of Brigance with references to such actual speakers as Eisenhower, Malcolm X, Lincoln, Emerson, John Silber, Henry Clay, Robert Ingersoll.

However, the approach represented by Walter and Scott seems to represent a minority position in speech education, today.

III. The Value of Including Public Life in Speech Education

How might more attention to public life improve the teaching of public speaking? The argument being developed here is that speech educators can accomplish all their current goals as well as some other useful objectives by giving students a wider context for visualizing themselves as speakers. By providing a broader model of public life it may be possible to strengthen the public sphere at the same time that we build more confident and competent speakers.

III.A. What rhetorical theory has to offer as a model for speech education.

III.A.1. Speech teachers may enrich the barebones notion of the source-message-channel-receiver process by connecting the abstracted elements of speech to American public life.

Classical concepts of rhetoric assumed a community linked by rhetorical communication. While Athenian citizenship was more closely linked to military service than fits our contemporary tastes, ancient rhetoric served as a vital underpinning of democracy that allowed citizens to put across ideas that would influence the community. Rhetoric then meant having something vital to say and putting the point eloquently in pursuit of agreement. I.F. Stone (in The Trial of Socrates) shows that a

major component of the Socratic condemnation of rhetoric was that rhetoric functioned to allow the middle class to participate in politics as the equals of the oligarchic families of Athens.

III.A.2. Today's interest in "cultural diversity" and a "multicultural education" actually may represent a window for opening public speaking course to public life.

Traditional rhetorical theory actually is responsive to the social, ethnic, and cultural tensions that today's students and citizens experience. Athenians were traditionally divided into four tribes who were suspicious of each other. Due to tribal tensions, offices sometimes were apportioned by lot, sometimes by tribe. One of the attractions of democracy was that debate allowed Athenians a way to make decisions without simply deferring to one or the other tribal traditions.

Students on our increasingly diverse campuses also belong to different "tribes." Current administrative practice is to remind students of their heritage and then surround each tribe with a soothing symbolism in the interest of making everyone feel at home. In many cases administrators fear that speaking and debating will worsen tensions because students might hurt each other's feelings.

In this connection, the public speaking classroom is a place to model another (less patronizing) response to cultural diversity. The instructional format emphasizes intelligent listening and the amassing of evidence in order to present ideas in a compelling way. The classroom context allows students to practice speaking on controversial issues in a small <u>polis</u> of interdependent people. Speech teachers could make each classroom a model of an effective public sphere by explicitly connecting the speech process to vital issues that concern students.

III.A.3. It would be a relatively simple matter to introduce the concept of the public sphere into the speech classroom. Instructors could supplement the S-M-C-R process with a view of the role of speech in society. To help students experience the concept of the public sphere, the instructor could structure assignments and class discussion such that students treated the classroom as a small-scale public world.

III.B. Public address: How a treatment of historical examples of speechmaking can help.

Examples of real speakers give students models for how others have confronted great issues in difficult times. An especially powerful cement for connecting historical examples

to speech process is the classical concept of eloquence.

III.B.1. Eloquent speaking--the kind of oratory that the "plain speech" movement set up as the enemy--is associated with a lively public sphere such as that in ancient Athens or the early Republic in the U.S. In rhetorical theory eloquence means important ideas conveyed with passion in a presentation that emphasized the best values of the community. Communication aiming at eloquence permits a holistic treatment that binds together the advocate, the idea, and the audience.

Representative of eloquence is the speaking of Demosthenes when he pleaded for Athens to take action against King Philip of Macedon:

"When, then, men of Athens, when, I say, will you take the action that is required? What are you waiting for? "We are waiting," you say, "till it is necessary." But what must we think of all that is happening at this present time?" (W. R. Conner, ed., Greek Orations [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966], p. 44.)

Here Demosthenes links his reasons to the thinking and acting capacities of his hearers. The ability of eloquence to unite ideas, passion, and the values of the community helped produce a lively public sphere that invited participation.

III.B.2. It would be difficult for speech teachers to convey a lively sense of eloquence without turning to historical examples of where speech made a difference. For instance, we may turn to Sojourner Truth's speech at a women's rights convention in 1851:

"That man over there say that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best places everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place--and ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman?" (text, edited by me, from J. Andrews and D. Zarefsky, American Voices [NY: Longman, 1989], p. 219.)

The eloquence of great speakers that yesterday's audiences took for granted may be contrasted to today's withered public speaking in which most speakers serve up sterile information and trite applause lines while others scream their commitments, daring anyone to challenge them.

III.B.3. It would be a relatively simple matter to build the concept of eloquence into our speech curriculum by including examples of great speakers on the great issues. If the examples

were not built into the textbook or into a supplemental reading, students could give reports on different speakers and how they changed society, overcame some problem, or whose eloquence came up against overwhelming resistance.

III.C. But there are obstacles to returning speech education to the notion of public sphere that prevailed before the Civil War.

III.C.1. Many speech educators object that the public sphere is too advanced a concept for the introductory course. One reviewer of my own public speaking text believed that some adopters probably would see coverage of Aristotle and Cicero plus the historical examples as making a book "too scholarly" (10/26/89). There seems to be a strong sentiment in speech education that public life is a subject for the advanced course only. Although examples seem to make material more accessible for students there is a strong bias among speech teachers that anything other than a hypothetical example may make a book too difficult to read for freshmen. Nevertheless, our students seem to be able to handle theoretical material and historical examples in their other classes--why not in ours?

III.C.2. Some speech educators are sure to object that the public sphere is too elitist, even (to employ one of today's devil terms) a "dead white male" concept. In fact, from my experience, the only time anyone gets <u>excited</u> about wanting more historical examples is when they question whether women and minorities are represented. This objection should be relatively easy to put aside by seeking out examples of speakers from the many tributory streams of American culture.

In the next few years, we may find ourselves in the ironic position of moving from pedagogical materials that virtually ignore American political culture to materials that emphasize the vibrant diversity of our political culture. Hopefully, this diversity will not merely be one of focusing on the gender and ethnicity of the speakers but also will entail some diversity of ideas expressed.

III.C.3. Peer review of textbooks stands as the major obstacle to changing pedagogy. In theory, at least, it is easy to build attention to public life into a textbook, even though such an endeavor makes the research and writing more difficult.

However, introducing anything that deviates from a current norm opens up a textbook writer to additional criticism therefore making it more difficult to implement a change. Textbook publishing is a ambiguous world in which the author spends the

first year persuading the publisher that the manuscript is "new" and "different." Once the reviewers get their hands on the full text, however, the next year is spent reassuring the publisher that the manuscript really is "just the same" as what everyone else is doing.

However much authors would want to put public life into their textbooks, they must contend with the difficulty that peer review presents for those who wish to depart from the norms. In fact, there is resistance in our field to merely supplementing the practice advice with research evidence. One reviewer advised me that my book "might be more appropriate" for a basic course if I included fewer references to and citations of research findings (review 6/19/87). At the same time, reviewers of public speaking textbooks worry about presenting too much material. One particularly candid reviewer cautioned me about one draft of the manuscript that "I am beginning to notice a pattern of developing concepts in too much detail" (review 6/15/88). Regarding the concept of organization, another explained that "I don't think any student would question the need to organize, and research showing the effects and benefits of organizing would certainly be relevant to a communication theory class, but clearly not relevant to a speech fundamentals class" (11/12/87). Many reviewers believe that all students want from our class is barebones advice and, as one put it, students are likely to say "Skip the Aristotle and just tell me what to do" (7/18/88).

Granted, most reviewers do not recommend expunging research and avoiding the development of concepts. In fact, I have detected a latent feeling among speech teachers that our introductory books give a bad impression of the field not only to students but to our colleagues. As one reviewer put the point:

"Too often students are left with the impression that research into communication processes is nonexistent and that the lists and suggestions found in their texts are 'common sense' and therefore of little value. I also think that students compare the tone of their texts with the tone of texts in other academic subjects. Speech texts that are too breezily written do not compare well and undermine the serious nature of the course" (review, 6/19/87).

Other reviewers similarly recommend going beyond barebones speech process and advice: "We need solid texts to introduce students to the field of speech communication" (review, 9/7/89).

Still, to the extent that our current pedagogical practice omits the public sphere, it will be difficult for text writers to include rhetorical and public address materials given the resistance of many reviewers to anything that deviates from the norm and the understandable nervousness of publishers in the face of such doubts.

IV. Conclusion

If we in the communication field bemoan the decline of public discourse, we have a corresponding responsibility to mold our pedagogical practices to stem this tide. By attending to the public sphere, we will help students understand the connection between their personal capacities as a speaker and their social responsibilities as citizens. By creating small communities of intelligent discourse, we will set in motion ripples of healing that will help mend our ruptured and fractured political process. And, in the bargain, by providing a holistic view of speaker, ideas, and society, we will enhance every other practical objective that we have set for the public speaking course since the advent of the "plain speech" movement.